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THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

Éilip do Dha an rna hárouib, agur ríobcáin ar an dealam deagtoil do na dáoinib,

LEWIS R. M.

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CONTENTS.

	Page.
The Life of a Reformer—Galileo—No. II.	121
The Right of Private Judgment—No. I.	122
Pseudo Miracles—The Rumbler on Belief in reputed Miracles— St. Januarius's Blood	123
John Baptist von Hirscher, P.D.	124
Light Shining in Darkness—No. I.	125
St. Colman and Mr. Wilberforce	126
The Dublin Review and the Union	127
CORRESPONDENCE:	
On the Invocation of Saints—by Mr. Collette	129
Readings in Kilpatrick, No. II.—by Denis Gaetano	129
All Starbowlings Ahoy! Do you Hear the News?—by Jack Tar	131
Farming Operations for November	131

GALILEO—No. II.

In our last number we gave an account of some of the brilliant discoveries by which Galileo placed himself at the head of the philosophers of his time. It has happened perhaps to few to make discoveries calculated to excite such lively interest and admiration among their contemporaries. Other philosophers may have displayed more penetrating sagacity or greater powers of accurate reasoning (though in these qualities, too, Galileo has earned for himself a high rank in the estimation of all ages); but it can happen but to few to have the good fortune to reveal new worlds to the knowledge of mankind. This was, in short, what Galileo did when he turned his telescope on the stars. His contemporaries listened with wonder while with his magic tube he revealed to them one secret after another, which, as yet, no eye but his was able to penetrate. At one time he disclosed the existence of new planets in addition to those seven to which the opinion of his time held that their number was necessarily limited; at another time he announced that Venus exhibits changing phases like those of our moon, demonstrating that she also shines only by light borrowed from the sun; at another he informs them of the singular appearance which Saturn presents, encompassed by so strange an appendage as a ring; at another time he shocks the prejudices of his age by asserting that the moon (instead of being a perfect sphere, as all celestial objects "ought" to be) has its surface disfigured by mountains and hollows; and afterwards shocks them still more by announcing that even the sun himself, the symbol of all perfection, has his surface covered with dark spots, and by inferring from the motion of those spots that the sun had a motion of revolution about its own axis. These few specimens of his discoveries may enable us to understand the enthusiasm with which they were greeted by the lovers of science at the time, and the eagerness with which Galileo's new theories of astronomy were received by the enlightened and unprejudiced. They will, at the same time, enable us to understand the caution which Galileo's position imposed even on his opponents. Even those who held his astronomical views to be heretical dared not to put him down summarily, as they might some obscure monk who should be detected preaching heresy. Those of them, at least, who had a regard for their own reputation were obliged to deal cautiously in assailing one who was owned to be at the head of the philosophers of his time, lest they should incur the reproach of being barbarians engaged in an attempt to quench the light of science. Hitherto there had been no suspicion that science might come into antagonism with religion, and Popes themselves had felt it an honour to come forward as the patrons of philosophers. The doctrines which were afterwards propounded by Galileo had been not unknown before; but they had been regarded as mere speculations of dreaming philosophers, not worthy the attention of theologians. Galileo put them forward in a way such as to force attention to them: he confirmed them by arguments; he behaved not like a man who had invented some fanciful hypothesis, but like one who believed that he had got hold of a real and absolute truth, of which he was fully persuaded himself, and which he was resolved to demonstrate to the satisfaction of others.

We mentioned in our last article what this truth was.

He was persuaded that the popular opinion of his day was erroneous in supposing that the earth was stationary in the centre of the universe, and that the sun and planets moved round it. He was persuaded that the sun was the centre of the planetary system, and that his daily and annual motion was only apparent. But here a cry was raised that this doctrine was opposed to the teaching of Scripture; for our readers are aware that the Bible employs freely the popular language, founded on the supposition of the sun's being at motion and the earth at rest, and that any one who looks in the Bible for a revelation as to the number or condition or motion of the heavenly bodies will look for it in vain.

The assault on Galileo was led by a Dominican friar named Caccini, who made his attack more pointed by choosing for the text of his sermon the verse, "Ye Galileans, why stand ye gazing up into heaven." The cry of heresy swelled and became formidable, and Galileo was forced to stand on his defence. He has been blamed in modern days for not being content with his philosophical pursuits, without intruding into the department of theology; but it will appear very plainly that it was not he who was intruding into the department of theology, but that he was only desirous to prevent theologians from intruding into the department of astronomy. The following extract will give a sufficient idea of the kind of arguments with which he resisted their attempts to decide astronomical questions by texts of Scripture:—

"I am inclined to believe that the intention of the sacred Scriptures was to give to mankind the information necessary for their salvation, and which, surpassing all human knowledge, can by no other means be accredited than by the mouth of the Holy Spirit. But I do not hold it necessary to believe that the same God who has endowed us with senses, with speech, and with intellect, intended that we should neglect the use of these, and seek by other means for knowledge which they are sufficient to procure for us; especially in a science like astronomy, of which so little notice is taken in the Scriptures, that none of the planets, except the sun and moon, and once or twice only Venus, under the name of Lucifer, are so much as named there. This, therefore, being granted, methinks that in the discussion of natural problems we ought not to begin at the authority of texts of Scripture, but at sensible experiments and necessary demonstrations; for from the divine Word the sacred Scripture and nature did both alike proceed; and I conceive that concerning natural effects, that which either sensible experience sets before our eyes, or necessary demonstrations do prove unto us, ought not upon any account be called into question, much less condemned, upon the testimony of scriptural texts, which may under their words couch senses seemingly contrary thereto."

The letter from which this extract is given was eagerly sought by Galileo's enemies, who were desirous of getting the original into their hands in order to found on it accusations against him. Caccini, the preacher of the sermon to which we have just referred, was busily employed at Rome in putting in order the depositions against Galileo. Under these circumstances the philosopher himself repaired to Rome: it is uncertain whether in consequence of a formal citation, or merely because he found it advisable personally to confront his enemies in that city. He was received there with all the honour due to his reputation, and was lodged in the palace of the ambassador of the Grand Duke of Florence, thus giving public refutation to the rumour that this patron of his had withdrawn his countenance from him. In every society he was ready to enter into argument on astronomical subjects, and defended his opinions with the greatest vigour and success. "What especially pleased me," says one of his auditors, "was that before replying to the contrary arguments he exemplified and enforced them with new grounds of great plausibility, so as to leave his adversaries in a more ridiculous plight when he afterwards overturned them all."

There seems good reason, however, to believe that his very success at Rome was injurious to his cause. Theologians who might have listened with good-natured indifference to the doctrine of the motion of the earth as long as it was a doubtful philosophical speculation were roused to action when it was boldly put forward as an

undoubted truth, and supported with such spirit and unyielding resolution. Accordingly, Galileo was not allowed to leave Rome without receiving formal notice thenceforward not to teach in any manner the doctrine of Copernicus, that the sun is in the centre of the system, and that the earth moves about it. The works of Copernicus, Galileo's own letters on the subject, with some other writings of a similar tendency, were placed in the list of forbidden books.

The contempt and indignation with which the philosopher received this decision will appear from the letter with which he forwarded to the Archduke Leopold his theory of the tides, published about two years afterwards, and which proceeds in the following ironical strain:—

"This theory occurred to me in Rome whilst the theologians were debating on the prohibition of Copernicus's book, and of the opinion maintained in it of the motion of the earth, which I at that time believed; until it pleased those gentlemen to suspend the book, and to declare the opinion false and repugnant to the holy Scriptures. Now, as I know how well it becomes me to obey and believe the decisions of my superiors, which proceed out of more profound knowledge than the weakness of my intellect can attain at, this theory which I send you, which is founded on the motion of the earth, I now look upon as a fiction and a dream, and beg your highness to receive it as such. But as poets often learn to prize the creations of their fancy, so, in like manner, do I set some value on this absurdity of mine. It is true that when I sketched this little work I did hope that Copernicus would not, after eighty years, be convicted of error, and I had intended to develop and amplify it further; but a voice from heaven suddenly awakened me, and at once annihilated all my confused and entangled fancies."

The same tone is found in a tract which he published on the motion of comets five or six years afterwards. "Since the motion attributed to the earth, which I as a pious and Catholic person consider most false and not to exist, accommodates itself so well as to explain so many and such different phenomena, I shall not feel sure but that, false as it is, it may not just as deludingly correspond with the phenomena of comets."

It was in the year 1616 that Galileo was ordered to abstain from teaching the Copernican system: it was in the year 1632 that he published the dialogues which again brought him into collision with the Inquisition and which gave rise to the proceedings which have become so notorious. We have seen in the above extracts that Galileo, in words at least, complied with the orders of his ecclesiastical superiors, and speaks of himself as bound in submission to their judgment to pronounce the Copernican opinions to be false and erroneous. He does not depart from this caution in his "Dialogue on the Ptolemaic and Copernican system." Had he pursued a different course, indeed, it would have been impossible for him to obtain the necessary licence for printing it. The form of a dialogue was selected as enabling him to state the arguments on both sides, without committing himself by too strong an expression of his personal adoption of the condemned side of the question. He alludes in his preface to the decree imposing silence on the Copernican opinions, and with his usual ill-concealed irony proclaims himself a defender of that decree against the slanders of those "who rashly asserted that the decree had originated, not in a judicious examination; but in ill-informed passion, and who complained that counsellors totally inexperienced in astronomical observations ought not, by hasty prohibitions, to clip the wings of speculative minds." He declares it to be his purpose to show that the Italian nation were, notwithstanding this decree, as well informed on astronomical subjects as any ultramontane people, and discussing the Copernican system as a mere mathematical hypothesis, to show, not its absolute truth, but its superiority to some bad arguments by which the opposite opinions had been supported.

It is possible that this show of respect for the decisions of Rome might have saved his work from condemnation, if it were not that among the arguments put into the mouth of one of the defeated speakers in the dialogue were some which the Pope himself had used in conversation with Galileo on his last visit to Rome: whereupon, the philosopher's enemies endeavoured to per-

suade the Pope that this personage in the dialogue was intended to represent and satirize the Pontiff himself. Certain it is that the Pope, who had hitherto shown himself friendly to Galileo, now withdrew his protection, and Galileo received a summons to appear before the Inquisition at Rome. It was in vain that the Florentine ambassador represented the advanced age of the philosopher, who had reached his seventieth year; the infirm state of his health; the dangers and discomforts of the journey; and interceded that his personal appearance might be dispensed with. It was declared to be indispensably necessary that he should be examined in person, and he accordingly made his appearance in Rome in February, 1633. In other respects he appears to have been treated with as much indulgence as their rules permitted by the Inquisitors, who did not forget the odium they would incur by unnecessary harshness towards so eminent a philosopher. Until personal examination was necessary, he was allowed to lodge, as before, at the Florentine ambassador's palace, though the strictest seclusion was prescribed to him, and it was intimated to him that he was to refuse to see any but his most intimate friends. When it became necessary to examine him personally, the three or four weeks which he spent within the walls of the Inquisition were not passed in any close or unwholesome dungeon, but in the apartments of the Fiscal of the Inquisition, where the attendance of his own servant was allowed him. Even this mitigated confinement had unfavourable effects upon his state of health.

It is, indeed, asserted by some that the recantation which was ultimately obtained from Galileo was wrung from him by the application of personal violence. The partisans of this opinion support it by the following statement in the sentence of the Inquisitors, given below, "Whereas it appeared to us that you had not disclosed the whole truth with regard to your intentions we thought it necessary to proceed to the 'rigorous examination' of you." And it is maintained that these words, *rigorosa esame*, are the ordinary official phrase for the application of torture. The fact, too, that Galileo, after this visit to Rome, was found to be affected with hernia (a common consequence of the application of the torture of the cord) is urged in support of the same opinion. Notwithstanding these arguments, we are unwilling to believe that the Inquisitors should have had recourse to a step so inconsistent with the mildness which characterized the rest of their treatment of Galileo, nor can we suppose that they would adopt a measure so impolitic and so likely to cover them with odium as the application of violence to the person of the greatest philosopher of the day. Neither had Galileo shown any such obstinacy as to make it likely that his recantation could only have been wrung from him by the infliction of torture. We have seen that in all his works written since the condemnation of Copernican doctrines in 1616 he professes, however insincerely, his belief in the falsity of the condemned opinions, and that he had never shown the least intention to make himself a martyr to his astronomical convictions. We, therefore, reject the story of the torture, and have no wish, without some better proofs, to cast additional odium on the Inquisitors, who, without this, have enough to answer for.

About four months after his arrival in Rome, Galileo was conducted in a penitential dress to the convent of Minerva, where, by the sentence of his judges, the venerable old man was solemnly called on to renounce and abjure, as impious and heretical, the opinions which his whole existence had been consecrated to form and strengthen.

The current story is that Galileo, as he rose from his knees from professing his belief in the earth's immovability, stamped on the ground and whispered to one of his friends, "It does move though" (*e pur si muove*). A Roman Catholic writer maintains that, *even admitting the truth of this common story*, Galileo, so far from being justly chargeable with dishonesty in his recantation, was worthy of high commendation. And the writer adds, "We will venture to say with confidence that when he passed out of this world into the next he was more thankful for having acted in this matter as became a good Christian than proud of all those brilliant discoveries whereby he had made himself famous as a wise philosopher."

We purpose in our next number to discuss the justness of the views concerning truth and falsehood which lie at the bottom of these opinions of the writer we have quoted, and we shall also consider whether the condemnation of Copernicus and Galileo casts any imputation on the infallibility of the Church of Rome. But we desire in this article to confine ourselves to laying before our readers the facts of the case, abstaining, as far as possible, from comments of our own.

Galileo after his recantation was removed, according to his sentence, to the prison of the Inquisition, but after a few days' interval was allowed to become a prisoner at large. He was permitted to return to his own house, but was obliged to observe the strictest seclusion. For instance, when, for the sake of his health, he was permitted to go to Florence, it was with the condition that he should neither quit his own house nor receive any friends at it. A special permission was necessary to enable him to go out to attend mass in Passion Week; and when his friend Castelli, himself employed by the court of Rome,

on visiting Florence desired to see him, it was only in the company of an officer of the Inquisition that the visit could be paid. His closing years were saddened by the severe affliction of total blindness, to which the further calamity of great deafness was afterwards added. His intellectual vigour, however, he retained to the last, and lived to the age of 78, dying just a year before the birth of his great successor, Sir Isaac Newton.

We have thought that it may interest our readers if we give at full length the sentence passed on Galileo by the Inquisition, as well as the retraction which he was forced to sign. The archives of the Roman Inquisition, were in the year 1809, by the order of Napoleon Buonaparte, removed to Paris, whence, after various adventures, they have ultimately found their way to the library of Trinity College, Dublin. The proceedings, however, concerning Galileo were at that time separated from the rest of the manuscripts, and a French translation of them commenced by Napoleon's desire, and these proceedings have not since been recovered.

THE SENTENCE OF THE INQUISITION ON GALILEO.

"We, the undersigned, by the Grace of God, Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, Inquisitors General throughout the whole Christian Republic, Special Deputies of the Holy Apostolical Chair against heretical depravity.

"Whereas, you, Galileo, son of the late Vincenzo Galilei, of Florence, aged seventy years, were denounced in 1616, to this Holy Office, for holding as true a false doctrine taught by many, namely, that the sun is immovable in the centre of the world, and that the earth moves, and also with a diurnal motion; also, for having pupils whom you instructed in the same opinions; also, for maintaining a correspondence on the same with some German mathematicians; also, for publishing certain letters on the solar spots, in which you developed the same doctrine as true; also, for answering the objections which were continually produced from the Holy Scriptures according to your own meaning; and, whereas, thereupon was produced the copy of a writing, in form of a letter, professedly written by you to a person formerly your pupil, in which, following the hypotheses of Copernicus, you include several propositions contrary to the true sense and authority of the Holy Scripture: therefore, this holy tribunal, being desirous of providing against the disorder and mischief which was then proceeding and increasing, to the detriment of the holy faith, by the desire of his Holiness, and of the most eminent Lords Cardinals of this supreme and universal inquisition, the two propositions of the stability of the sun and motion of the earth were qualified by the theological qualifiers as follows:—

"1st. *The proposition that the sun is in the centre of the world and immovable from its place is absurd, philosophically false, and formally heretical; because it is expressly contrary to the Holy Scripture.*

"2nd. *The proposition that the earth is not in the centre of the world, nor immovable, but that it moves, and also with a diurnal motion, is also absurd, philosophically false, and, theologically considered, at least erroneous in faith.*

"But, whereas, being pleased at that time to deal mildly with you, it was decreed in the Holy Congregation, held before his Holiness on the 25th day of February, 1616, that his eminence the Lord Cardinal Bellarmine should enjoin you to give up altogether the said false doctrine; if you should refuse, that you should be ordered by the Commissary of the Holy Office to relinquish it, not to teach it to others, nor to defend it, nor ever mention it, and in default of acquiescence, that you should be imprisoned; and in execution of this decree, on the following day, at the palace, in presence of his eminence the said Lord Cardinal Bellarmine, after you had been mildly admonished by the said Lord Cardinal, you were commanded by the Acting Commissary of the Holy Office, before a notary and witnesses, to relinquish altogether the said false opinion, and in future neither to defend nor teach it in any manner, neither verbally nor in writing, and upon your promising obedience you were dismissed.

"And in order that so pernicious a doctrine might be altogether rooted out, nor insinuate itself farther, to the heavy detriment of the Catholic truth, a decree emanated from the Holy Congregation of the Index, prohibiting the books which treat of this doctrine; and it was declared false, and altogether contrary to the Holy and Divine Scripture.

"And, whereas, a book has since appeared, published at Florence last year, the title of which showed that you were the author, which title is, *The Dialogue of Galileo Galilei on the two principal systems of the World, the Ptolemaic and Copernican*; and, whereas, the Holy Congregation has heard that, in consequence of the printing of the said book, the false opinion of the earth's motion and stability of the sun is daily gaining ground; the said book has been taken into careful consideration, and in it has been detected a glaring violation of the said order, which had been intimated to you; inasmuch as in this book you have defended the said opinion, already and in your presence condemned; although in the said book you labour with many circumlocutions to induce the belief that it is left by you undecided, and in express terms probable; which is equally a very grave error, since an opinion can in no way be probable which has been already declared and finally determined contrary to the divine Scripture. Therefore, by our order, you have been cited to this Holy Office, where, on your examination upon oath, you have acknowledged the said book as written and printed by you. You also confessed that you began to write the said book ten or twelve years ago, after the order aforesaid had been given. Also, that you demanded licence to publish it, but without signifying to those who granted you this permission that you had been commanded not to hold, defend, or teach the said doctrine in any manner. You also confessed that the style of the said book was, in many places, so composed that the reader might think the arguments adduced on the false side to be so worded as more effectually to entangle the understanding than to be easily solved, alleging in excuse that you have thus run into an error, foreign (as you say) to your intention, from writing in the form of a dialogue, and, in consequence of the natural complacency which every one feels with regard to his own subtil-

ties, and in showing himself more skilful than the generality of mankind in contriving, even in favour of false propositions, ingenious and apparently probable arguments.

"And, upon convenient time being given to you for making your defence, you produced a certificate in the handwriting of his eminence the Lord Cardinal Bellarmine, procured, as you said, by yourself, that you might defend yourself against the calumnies of your enemies, who reported that you had abjured your opinions, and had been punished by the Holy Office; in which certificate it is declared that you had not abjured, nor had been punished, but merely that the declaration made by his Holiness, and promulgated by the Holy Congregation of the Index, had been announced to you, which declares that the opinion of the motion of the earth and stability of the sun is contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and, therefore, cannot be held or defended. Wherefore, since no mention is there made of two articles of the order, to wit, the order 'not to teach,' and 'in any manner,' you argued that we ought to believe that, in the lapse of fourteen or sixteen years, they had escaped your memory, and that this was also the reason why you were silent as to the order, when you sought permission to publish your book; and that this is said by you not to excuse your error, but that it may be attributed to vain glorious ambition, rather than to malice. But this very certificate, produced on your behalf, has greatly aggravated your offence, since it is therein declared that the said opinion is contrary to the Holy Scripture, and yet you have dared to treat of it, to defend it, and to argue that it is probable; nor is there any extenuation in the licence artfully and cunningly extorted by you, since you did not intimate the command imposed upon you. But, whereas, it appeared to us that you had not disclosed the whole truth with regard to your intentions, we thought it necessary to proceed to the rigorous examination of you, in which (without any prejudice to what you had confessed, and which is above detailed against you, with regard to your said intention) you answered like a good Catholic.

"Wherefore, having seen and maturely considered the merits of your case, with your said confessions and excuses, and every thing else which ought to be seen and considered, we have come to the underwritten final sentence against you.

"Invoking, therefore, the most holy name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and of his Most Glorious Virgin Mother Mary, by this our final sentence, which, sitting in council and judgment for the tribunal of the Reverend Masters of Sacred Theology, and Doctors of both Laws, our assessors, we put forth in this writing, touching the matters and controversies before us, between the Magnificent Charles Sincerus, Doctor of both Laws, Fiscal Proctor of this Holy Office, of the one part, and you Galileo Galilei, an examined and confessed criminal from this present writing now in progress as above, of the other part, we pronounce, judge, and declare, that you, the said Galileo, by reason of these things which have been detailed in the course of this writing, and which, as above, you have confessed, have rendered yourself vehemently suspected by this Holy Office of heresy: that is to say, that you believe and hold the false doctrine, and contrary to the Holy and Divine Scriptures, namely, that the sun is the centre of the world, and that it does not move from east to west, and that the earth does move, and is not the centre of the world; also, that an opinion can be held and supported as probable after it has been declared and finally decreed contrary to the Holy Scripture, and, consequently, that you have incurred all the censures and penalties enjoined and promulgated in the sacred canons, and other general and particular constitutions against delinquents of this description. From which it is our pleasure that you be absolved, provided that, first, with a sincere heart and unfeigned faith, in our presence, you abjure, curse, and detest the said errors and heresies, and every other error and heresy contrary to the Catholic and Apostolical Church of Rome, in the form now shown to you.

"But, that your grievous and pernicious error and transgression may not go altogether unpunished, and that you may be made more cautious in future, and may be a warning to others to abstain from delinquencies of this sort, we decree that the book of the dialogues of Galileo Galilei be prohibited by a public edict, and we condemn you to the formal prison of this Holy Office for a period determinable at our pleasure; and, by way of salutary penance, we order you, during the next three years, to recite once a week the seven penitential psalms, reserving to ourselves the power of moderating, commuting, or taking off the whole or part of the said punishment and penance.

"And so, we say, pronounce, and by our sentence declare, decree, and reserve, in this and in every other better form and manner, which lawfully we may and can use.

"So we, the subscribing Cardinals, pronounce.

"FELIX, Cardinal di Ascoli.

"GUIDO, Cardinal Bentivoglio.

"DESIDERIO, Cardinal di Cremona.

"ANTONIO, Cardinal S. Onofrio.

"BERNARDINO, Cardinal Geset.

"FABRIZIO, Cardinal Verospi.

"MARTINO, Cardinal Ginetti."

THE ABJURATION OF GALILEO.

"I, Galileo Galilei, son of the late Vincenzo Galilei, of Florence, aged 70 years, being brought personally to judgment, and kneeling before you, most eminent and most Reverend Lords Cardinals, General Inquisitors of the universal Christian republic against heretical depravity, having before my eyes the Holy Gospels, which I touch with my own hands, swear, that I have always believed, and now believe, and with the help of God will in future believe, every article which the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Rome holds, teaches, and preaches. But, because I had been enjoined by this Holy Office altogether to abandon the false opinion which maintains that the sun is the centre and immovable, and forbidden to hold, defend, or teach the said false doctrine in any manner, and after it had been signified to me that the said doctrine is repugnant with the Holy Scripture, I have written and printed a book, in which I treat of the same doctrine now condemned, and adduce reasons with great force in support of the same, without giving any solution, and, therefore, have been judged grievously suspected of heresy; that is to say, that I held and believed that the sun is the centre of the world and immovable, and that the earth is not the centre and movable; willing, therefore, to remove

from the minds of your eminences, and of every Catholic Christian, this vehement suspicion rightfully entertained towards me, with a sincere heart and unfeigned faith I abjure, curse, and detest the said errors and heresies, and generally every other error and sect contrary to the said Holy Church; and I swear that I will never more in future say or assert anything verbally, or in writing, which may give rise to a similar suspicion of me; but if I shall know any heretic, or any one suspected of heresy, that I will denounce him to this Holy Office, or to the inquisitor and ordinary of the place in which I may be. I swear, moreover, and promise, that I will fulfil and observe fully all the penances which have been, or shall be, laid on me by this Holy Office. But, if it shall happen that I violate any of my said promises, oaths, and protestations (which God avert!), I subject myself to all the pains and punishments which have been decreed and promulgated by the sacred canons, and other general and particular constitutions, against delinquents of this description. So may God help me, and His Holy Gospels, which I touch with my own hands. I, the above named Galileo Galilei, have abjured, sworn, promised, and bound myself, as above, and in witness thereof with my own hand have subscribed this present writing of my abjuration, which I have recited word for word. At Rome, in the Convent of Minerva, 22nd June, 1633. I, Galileo Galilei, have abjured as above with my own hand."

(To be continued.)

THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT.

THAT it is the duty of Christian people to examine the grounds of their religion and faith, and not to take them upon trust, constitutes one of the fundamental principles of Protestantism which most widely separate it from the Church of Rome. It is, in fact, only another form of stating the principle of the right of Private Judgment. And as there is hardly any of the points at issue between Protestants and Roman Catholics about which more misconception and misrepresentation have prevailed than this one of the right of Private Judgment, we think it may be useful to offer a few considerations on the subject. Our object shall be as well to establish this right on the basis of reason and of Scripture as to obviate the misconceptions and to expose the misrepresentations by which its true import has been obscured and perverted. The subject, we need not add, is one of very great importance, and, therefore, we would invite the calm and serious attention of our Roman Catholic readers to the following remarks.

First, then, as to the *reason of the case*. It requires but little argument to prove that a being endowed by God with the noblest of all His gifts—an immortal soul—is responsible to Him for the proper use of the faculties with which that soul has been furnished. Of these faculties, reason and conscience are the chief. Every individual man is endowed with them, and, therefore, every man is individually accountable for them. The responsibility which he incurs in virtue of them he cannot transfer to any other man, or to any society of men, because it is a *personal* matter; it is a transaction between him and his Maker, in which no other creature has a right to meddle, and to which he himself has no right to admit any other creature to be a party. Now, the proper use, so far as regards religion, of the faculty of reason obviously is to endeavour to find out, by all available means, whatever may be known concerning God's nature, His will respecting us, and the most acceptable mode of rendering to Him worship and service. If a system of religion be proposed to us which professes to impart the necessary information on these points, our duty as plainly is to examine to the utmost of our ability the grounds on which its authority rests. And if we have reasonably satisfied ourselves that it really is what it claims to be, then we are bound in reason to adopt it as our own. And should there be more than one such system of religious belief prevalent in the world, each claiming to be itself the true one, we cannot acquit ourselves of our responsibility to God without investigating their respective claims, and, before we give in our adhesion to any of them, reasonably satisfying ourselves both as to their absolute and relative truth. In carrying on this inquiry, our reason is the proper judge of the *external evidence* by which the advocates of each system endeavour to prove that what they hold is a revelation from God. It is also to some extent a judge of the *consistency* of the different parts of the system with each other, and of its conformity with the moral nature which God has implanted within us; that is to say, our reason cannot accept as a divine revelation any system which contains plain contradictions or inculcates manifest immoralities. It is in the latter inquiry, that, viz., connected with the morality of the system, that our conscience must be consulted and plays its proper part. Our responsibility to God, then, as rational beings, endowed with reasoning faculties and moral instincts, absolutely demands that our religious belief should be based upon a *reasonable conviction* that what we believe is true. It is not enough reasonably to satisfy us of the truth of our creed that our fathers have held it before us. For, on this ground a Mahometan would be just as acceptable in God's sight as the most devoted servant of Jesus. Nor is it enough that the religion of our forefathers should be able to plead antiquity in its favour, and trace itself back for hundreds or thousands of years. For, were this the case, the votaries of the revolting superstitions of India would be right in rejecting the religion of the Cross. Nor, again, is it safe and right for a man to acquiesce without inquiry in whatever the spiritual guides under whom he finds himself placed may declare to be true. For, on this principle, the idolatry into which the ancient people of God were from

time to time led, by their apostate high priests or false prophets, might be justified. On the same principle, the Jews who rejected and crucified the Redeemer might be justified; because they did that for which they had the authority of their High Priest and Sanhedrim. The same principle would have justified them afterwards in rejecting the Christian doctrine, and persecuting the Apostles and other first preachers of it. The same principle would also have effectually hindered the propagation of Christianity among the heathen, whose spiritual guides were, as a class, naturally opposed to it. In short, unless we admit the principle that every man is responsible to God for his creed, and that it is, consequently, his duty no less than his right to satisfy himself as to the reasonable grounds of his faith, and not to take them simply upon trust, we shall arrive at the monstrous conclusion that all religions are equally good, and that a man may be saved out of the Church of Christ as certainly as in it.

The reason of the case, then, being altogether in favour of the Protestant principle of the right and duty of private judgment in religion, let us next consider what Scripture says upon the subject. The testimony of Scripture is so explicit and decisive, that it is only a wonder how any one who admits its authority at all can for a moment dispute the point. Were the Bible more generally and carefully read by Roman Catholics than, unfortunately, it is, we have no doubt that such considerations as the following must have presented themselves to many of them, at least, with irresistible force. Our blessed Lord addressed to the people at large such of His discourses as were not purposely designed for His disciples alone. He assumes the multitude to be competent to judge of His arguments in support of the new revelation which He came to communicate, and against the false system which their authorized spiritual guides had engrained on the former revelation made by God to Moses and the prophets. He nowhere countenances for a moment the notion of a blind and implicit acquiescence in the established system of religion, merely because it was taught and enforced by the supreme religious Council of the nation. On the contrary, in the Sermon on the Mount, and elsewhere, He points out and condemns some of the spurious additions which they made to the written Law, and some of the false interpretations which they put upon it, and openly accuses them of having made void the law of God through their traditions. He did not merely assert all this in virtue of His authority as a teacher sent from God, but He actually appealed to the reason and judgment of His auditory, and remonstrated with them for not making use of their judgment—"And why even of yourselves do you not judge that which is just?"—(Luke xii. 57, Douay version.) The Apostles also in their teaching imitate in this respect the example of their Divine Master. St. Paul expressly commands his Thessalonian converts to "Prove all things," and to "hold fast that which is good."—1 Thess. v. 21. This epistle was addressed, not to the bishops and governors only of the Church at Thessalonica, but to the whole "Church of the Thessalonians," as we find in ch. i. 1. And we may observe in general that the Epistles in the New Testament are, for the most part, addressed to the whole body of the faithful. Thus, we read, Rom. i. 7, "To all that are at Rome, the beloved of God, called to be saints." Again, 1 Cor. i. 2, "To the Church of God that is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that invoke the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place of their: and ours." Again, Gal. i. 2, "To the Churches of Galatia." Again, Eph. i. 1, "To all the saints who are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." Again, Col. i. 1, "To the saints and faithful brethren who are at Colossæ." And it is remarkable that when the bishops and other ministers of the Church are specially named, the whole body of the faithful are not forgotten. Thus, Phil. i. 2, "To all the saints in Christ Jesus, who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." It is only his pastoral epistles (those to Timothy and Titus) that St. Paul directs to the governors of the Church, because his object in them is to give particular directions respecting Church government and discipline. In all other cases, with the exception of the private letter to Philemon, he addresses the whole body of Christian believers. The same is true of the remaining epistles of the New Testament.

Thus, then, our blessed Lord and His inspired Apostles not only recognise the right and duty of Private Judgment in matters of religion, but in all their teaching they assume it as a fundamental principle.

We now proceed to notice some of the *misconceptions and misrepresentations* which prevail respecting this right of Private Judgment in religion, and which have embarrassed the subject with much needless difficulty, and given occasion to many unfounded objections.

It has been taken for granted by some weak-minded persons, and the idea has been seized hold of and perseveringly insisted on by Roman Catholic controversialists, that the Protestant principle of the right of Private Judgment asserts an *absolute and unlimited licence* for individual opinion about all questions connected with religion. Nothing can be more remote from truth than this idea. Like all natural rights, the right of Private Judgment has its corresponding duties, obligations, and restrictions. Every man, to take an illustration, has a natural right to whatever may be essential to his existence and well-being. But this right does not entitle him to kill or rob his neighbour in order to supply his own wants. The duties which

he owes to God and to his fellow-man limit the exercise of his abstract right of self-preservation; and if he disregards the limitation, he becomes justly obnoxious to the penalties exacted against homicide and robbery. Again, every man claims the general right to do what he wishes with himself and his own property. But this abstract claim does not justify him in committing suicide, or slowly destroying himself by intemperance, or spending his money in practices injurious to other individuals, or to society at large. And so, in like manner, the natural right of Private Judgment in religion is not absolute and unconditional, but is limited and restrained by duties and obligations quite as natural and quite as essential as the right itself. There is, for example, the primary duty of a reverential regard for God's revealed Word, when known to be His; and of humble acquiescence in whatever it makes known, however startling to human reason or distasteful to corrupt human nature. There is also the duty of a jealous distrust of the conclusions of reason when it speculates about things beyond the sphere of natural knowledge, and respecting which Scripture is either wholly silent or studiously reserved. There is, again, the duty of a prayerful study of the Bible, aided and directed, as far as possible, by all the additional light thrown upon it by human learning and research. There is, moreover, the duty of respectful attention and deference to the interpretations of Scripture current in the Church from the primitive ages, and embodied in her creeds and other formularies:—an attention and deference not excluding the right of examining these interpretations, and testing their conformity to the Word of God, but causing the examination to be conducted in a sober and earnest spirit. When the right of Private Judgment is controlled and directed by a proper regard to these fundamental duties and obligations, there is no fear that it will degenerate into that wild license of opinion with which it has been most erroneously and unjustly confounded. The accusations, therefore, and objections which Roman Catholic divines bring against the principle of Private Judgment, as leading to unbridled license of opinion, are founded on an utter misrepresentation of what that principle really imports. The charge may apply to the wild and licentious rationalism of Germany, but they wholly miss their aim when directed against genuine Protestantism.

We hope to resume this subject in our next number, when we shall expose some other misrepresentations of this principle, and answer the objections based upon them.

PSEUDO-MIRACLES.

It is really refreshing to us, as lovers of truth and haters of imposture in any shape, to see a publication like the *Rambler*, with which, in many things, we differ so much, boldly coming forward to expose "pious frauds" and "pious credulity," as productive, as they really are, of deadly mischief to the cause of religion; and not only expressing disbelief in some of the most successful modern ecclesiastical miracles, but actually bringing forward remarkable instances of the recent detection of others, as a warning to be wary in giving credence to such pretensions in future.

The *Rambler* for last month, in an article "On belief in reputed miracles" (p. 290), contains, among others, the following very wholesome and important positions:—

1st. That to suppose that it indicates a "pious" mind to be disposed to believe in every miraculous report which may have been spread, before the process of investigation has taken place, is a dangerous error, and contrary to the most elementary principles of all reasoning. "Because a thing may happen, we are not justified in believing that it *probably* will happen."

When the Catholic proceeds to the detailed examination of each case individually, he cannot forget that the question before him is purely and entirely one of human testimony.

His bias, whether for or against a report, previous to his examination, is determined by his knowledge of the average value of similar reports in cases which have been investigated.

He knows that, as a rule, experience shows that out of six reports of supernatural agency five usually prove incorrect, he approaches the investigation of any fresh one with the recollection of the past before his mind, and he holds that the chances are five to one against this new case until it is inquired into. The whole question before him is one of fact—of external, visible, physical fact—to be determined by the same laws of evidence which would determine the reality of any supernatural fact, where there was no question of the supernatural at all involved. The circumstance that it is *supposed* to be a miracle does not, in the least, affect the value of the evidence whether it is true. He is not concerned with the acts of Almighty God at all, until the examination is concluded; he is concerned only with man, and his capacities for giving correct evidence in cases of the description before him. Nor has he any right to allow his judgment to be warped by his wish to find the supposed miracle a real miracle. The question, what he would like Almighty God to have done ought not to bias him in his inquiries as to what God has done. God is Himself the only Judge when a miracle shall be wrought, and of what kind it shall be; and for us, when we hear it said that such and such a marvel is reported, to jump to the conclusion that, most likely, it is true,